

We Claim:

1. In an electronic voting system having at least one voter client, the improvement comprising:

5 a read only storage medium operably configured to boot the voter client for exclusive execution of program instructions found only on the read only storage medium at the voter client during the performance of an election, the exclusive execution of program instructions excepting system device drivers as needed for operation of the voter client.

10 2. The electronic voting system as set forth in claim 1 including means for verifying system device drivers in use by the voter client to assure that the drivers are not corrupted.

3. The electronic voting system as set forth in claim 1 wherein said read only storage medium is a CD ROM.

15 4. The electronic voting system as set forth in claim 1 further including an election server operably configured for Internet communications with the voter client.

5. The electronic voting system as set forth in claim 4 including means for providing multiple layer authentication to verify and authorize the voter client to participate in an election.

20 6. The electronic voting system as set forth in claim 1 including means for writing to a second disk all system information and device drivers that are required for operation of the voter client and which are not found on the read only storage medium.

25 7. The electronic voting system as set forth in claim 1 including means for diagnosing whether a read mechanism for the read only storage device is capable of booting the voter client.

8. The electronic voting system as set forth in claim 7 including means for making a floppy startup disk when the read mechanism for the read only storage device is not capable of booting the voter client.

30 9. The electronic voting system as set forth in claim 8 including means for using the floppy startup disk to transfer program control to the read only

storage device for exclusive execution of program instructions found on the read only storage device.

10. The electronic voting system as set forth in claim 1 including said read only storage medium including a numerical server address for use in
5 providing a sponsored Internet connection.

11. The electronic voting system as set forth in claim 10 including a plurality of voter clients and a corresponding plurality of read only storage media including a group of server addresses distributed among said read only storage media.

10 12. The electronic voting system as set forth in claim 11 wherein the group of server addresses is distributed among the plurality of voter clients to provide a voter client to server ratio sufficiently low to permit an election server to prevent a denial of service attack.

13. A secure program storage device comprising:

15 a storage medium bearing program instructions operable to booting a computer for exclusive execution of program instructions found only on the read only storage medium at the computer, the exclusive execution of program instructions excepting system device drivers as needed for operation of the computer; and

20 means for identifying system device drivers in normal use on said computer and for providing correspondingly appropriate system device drivers for use in conjunction with said program instructions.

25 14. The secure program storage device as set forth in claim 13 including program instructions for verifying system device drivers in use by the computer during execution of said program instructions to assure that the drivers are not corrupted.

15. The secure program storage device as set forth in claim 13 wherein said storage medium is a CD ROM.

30 16. The secure program storage device as set forth in claim 13 including program instructions for writing to a floppy disk all system information and device

drivers that are required for operation of the computer and which are not found on the read only storage medium.

17. The secure program storage device as set forth in claim 16 including program instructions for diagnosing whether a read mechanism for the read only storage device is capable of booting the computer.

18. The secure program storage device as set forth in claim 16 including program instructions for making a floppy startup disk when the read mechanism for the read only storage device is not capable of booting the computer.

19. The secure program storage device as set forth in claim 18 including program instructions for using the floppy startup disk to transfer program control to the read only storage device for exclusive execution of program instructions found on the read only storage device.

20. The secure program storage device as set forth in claim 13 wherein said program instructions are operable to boot said computer as a voter client on a network election system.

21. The secure program storage device as set forth in claim 13 wherein said program instructions are operable to boot said computer as a voter client on a network election system consisting essentially of a sponsored Internet connection.

22. A method of operating an Internet voting system to protect the system from the operation of malicious software, the method comprising the steps of:

distributing read only memory storage devices to a plurality of prospective voters, the read only storage devices containing machine instructions for booting a voter client for exclusive execution of program instructions found only on the read only storage medium at the voter client during the performance of an election, the exclusive execution of program instructions excepting system device drivers as needed for operation of the voter client;

running election program instructions found on the read only storage devices on voter client machines;

establishing an Internet connection; and

voting by voters through use of the voter clients while the voter client is executing program instructions found on the read only memory storage devices.

23. The method of operating an Internet voting system as set forth in claim 22 including a step of obtaining information required to operate the voter client by 5 polling the voter client prior to the step of running election program instructions.

24. The method of operating an Internet voting system as set forth in claim 22 wherein said step of establishing an Internet connection is performed over a sponsored Internet connection.